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# THE EFFECT OF A COURSE IN OCCUPATIONS ON THE VOCATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PLANS OF NINTH-GRADE CHILDREN

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## THE PROBLEM AND SOURCES OF DATA

While the values of a course in occupations are by no means confined to possibilities that are inherent in the changes in vocational and educational intentions, the changes that take place in these plans should furnish some evidence of the effects of such a course. For the purposes of noting these effects the study reported here was planned and executed.

Involved in the study were 187 boys and 201 girls in Grade IX of two junior high schools in Minneapolis. One of these schools receives pupils mainly from the better class of homes, with a few from middle-class homes. The pupils in the other school come mainly from middle-class homes. The first school serves families of a few skilled and a very few unskilled workers, but mainly the families of professional and business men. The second serves the families of a few professional men, a number of businessmen, and a few unskilled workers, but mainly those of skilled workers.

All these pupils were in classes studying "Community Life and Civic Problems," a required course in Minneapolis for all pupils in Grade IX A. The content of this course, as revealed by the printed course of study and the teachers of the eleven classes, includes a unit dealing with vocational and educational guidance. The unit covers about nine weeks of study, beginning with a general survey of occupations. Next, each pupil makes a study of his own abilities and interests and then one or more intensive studies of an occupation in which he is especially interested as a possible life-career. The last

part of the unit involves the study of educational opportunities. It includes the study of schools of different types and of the amount of education necessary and recommended for various occupations, with special emphasis on the occupational value of courses offered in the Minneapolis senior high schools. As a conclusion for the course, the pupils make their own tentative programs of studies for Grade X and in many instances programs for the last three years of senior high school.

The children studied were a slightly superior group, the boys having a mean intelligence quotient of 105.6 and the girls 108.1, as calculated from scores on the Otis Self-administering Tests of Mental Ability.

#### FACTORS RELATED TO CHANGE IN OCCUPATIONAL INTENTION

Each pupil was asked to state his occupational choice, if he had one, at the beginning of the course and again at the close of the course. As may be noted from Table 1, the proportions of the pupils having a choice increased materially during the experimental period, especially among the boys.

The consistency of choice is shown by Table 2. The girls tended to retain their original vocational predispositions more than did the boys, although about a fourth of each made changes in occupational choices during the semester. The boys choosing different vocations at the conclusion of the course in which occupations were studied, as well as those having no choice at the beginning, were, on the average, slightly less intelligent than those who kept to their original choices. The girls making changes were somewhat more intelligent than those retaining their original plans.

With respect to marks earned in the six junior high school semesters, boys sticking to their first vocational choices made better marks than did those making changes or those who did not have choices at the outset. No noteworthy differences were observed in the marks of the two groups of girls.

An arbitrary "efficiency index" was computed for each pupil by converting the average of marks received in the six semesters of junior high school and the intelligence-test score separately into units of standard deviation from the means and then subtracting the stand-

ard score in intelligence from the standard score in achievement. In terms of these efficiency-index scores the only noteworthy finding was that the boys who had no vocational preferences at the beginning of the course made lower achievement records in proportion to ability than did the boys who had initial preferences, the median differ-

TABLE 1  
PERCENTAGES OF 187 BOYS AND 201 GIRLS WITH  
OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES BEFORE AND AFTER  
COURSE IN OCCUPATIONS

	Boys	Girls	Both
Before guidance.....	69.5	85.1	77.6
After guidance.....	94.7	99.0	96.9

TABLE 2  
STATUS OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES OF 187 BOYS AND 201  
GIRLS BEFORE AND AFTER COURSE IN OCCUPATIONS

	Percentage of Boys	Percentage of Girls	Percentage of Both
Same occupational choice before and after guidance.....	44.9	60.2	52.8
Different occupational choice before and after guidance.....	23.0	23.9	23.5
No occupational choice before but with a choice after guidance.....	26.7	14.9	20.6
Occupational choice before but none after guidance.....	1.6	1.0	1.3
No choice before or after guidance.....	3.7	0.0	1.8

ence being about 0.6 of a standard deviation. Girls of the high-efficiency groups tended to maintain their original preferences.

Table 3 shows that, contrary to what might be expected, more boys and more girls who underwent changes in vocational preferences chose the second time an occupation of higher level than chose an occupation of a lower level, as judged by the Barr Scale for Measuring Mental Ability in Vocations.

An attempt was made to see how many who changed their preferences chose the second time occupations presumably more

appropriate to their intelligence. The number of improved choices was slightly larger than the number of less appropriate choices.

#### REASONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL INTENTIONS AND RELATED FACTORS

On each occasion when the pupil was asked to register his choice, he was also asked to check, among twenty-five reasons listed, the most influential reason, the second most influential reason, and the

TABLE 3

STATUS ON BARR VOCATIONAL SCALE AND APPROPRIATENESS  
TO PUPILS' INTELLIGENCE OF CHOICES OF OCCUPATIONS  
MADE BY 43 BOYS AND 48 GIRLS WHO CHANGED THEIR  
PREFERENCES AFTER COURSE IN OCCUPATIONS

Level of New Choice	Boys	Girls	Both
Level of second choice on Barr scale:			
Higher.....	20	27	47
Lower.....	19	16	35
Same.....	4	5	9
Appropriateness of choice to pupils' intelligence:			
Better choice.....	17	16	33
Poorer choice.....	8	15	23
Equally good choice.....	18	17	35

third most influential reason in determining his choice. The following list shows that certain reasons rose and certain others fell markedly in relative rank assigned by these 388 pupils, presumably as the result of the course, at least in part.

#### REASONS WHICH FELL MOST MARKEDLY IN IMPORTANCE AMONG BOYS

1. Ease of entering the occupation in this particular locality.
2. Opportunities to develop through study and travel.
3. Already had experience in the occupation.
- \*4. Opportunities for doing good for people.
- \*5. Good salary or income.

\* The reasons marked with asterisks also made the same change in the case of the other sex.

6. I must start earning money very soon.
7. My friends suggested it.

#### AMONG GIRLS

1. Desire to enter same work as a friend or friends.
2. Opportunities to develop through study and travel.
- \*3. Good salary or income.
4. My parents suggest it.
5. I would like the adventure, novelty, or excitement.
- \*6. Opportunities for doing good for people.
7. Work would be sure and steady.

#### REASONS WHICH GAINED RANK MOST MARKEDLY

##### AMONG BOYS

1. The kind of people I would come in contact with.
2. Respect attached to people in this occupation.
- \*3. Would like to do same work as a successful person I have learned about.
- \*4. Good future in this occupation.
5. My father's being in this occupation will give me an advantage.
6. The work is easy.

##### AMONG GIRLS

- \*1. Good future in this occupation.
2. Conditions and surroundings of work.
3. Good opportunities for advancement.
4. My teacher suggested it.
- \*5. Would like to do same work as a successful person I have learned about.
6. Independence and freedom to develop own ideas.

Table 4 shows that the boys in this study are looking forward to vocations of higher level than those of their fathers. This finding is the same as that of other investigations.

#### EDUCATIONAL PLANS

Neither sex showed a material difference in the percentage of pupils planning to complete high school after the course as compared with the percentage registering that intention at the beginning. There were, however, marked increases in the percentages of pupils of both sexes who had made definite plans with respect to the curriculum that they would follow in high school. This change was particularly noticeable among pupils who had had no occupational choices at the

beginning but had preferences at the close of the semester. There was also a slight increase in the percentage (46.9 to 52.1) planning to go to college.

TABLE 4

LEVEL OF OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES OF BOYS IN COURSE IN OCCUPATIONS  
COMPARED WITH LEVEL OF FATHERS' OCCUPATIONS

Son's Occupational Choice	Higher Level than Father	Same Level as Father	Lower Level than Father	Same Occupation as Father	No Occupation Listed for Father
Same occupation before and after guidance.....	58	3	9	13	1
Different occupation after guidance:					
First choice.....	34	3	6	.....	.....
Second choice.....	37	2	4	.....	.....
No occupation before but with choice after guidance.....	28	4	10	7	1
With occupational choice before but none after guidance.....	1	1	2	.....	.....
Total.....	158	13	31	20	2

## CONCLUSIONS

From the time of the beginning of a semester course involving guidance activities and information concerning vocations, certain changes took place in the vocational and the educational intentions of ninth-grade boys and girls in two Minneapolis junior high schools. To some extent, at any rate, it is reasonable to attribute those changes to the guidance materials and activities in the course. Among the most noteworthy of those changes and factors related to the changes may be mentioned:

1. The percentage of pupils having chosen, at least tentatively, their future occupations increased markedly, especially among the boys.
2. Girls tended to retain their original choices more than boys, about half of the boys and 40 per cent of the girls making changes after the course in occupations.
3. The boys who revised their occupational choices were of lower-than-average intelligence, while the girls who changed their preferences were of greater-than-average intelligence.

4. Change in occupational choice is apparently not closely related to quality of marks, but the pupils who did not change their tentative vocational choices achieved more in proportion to their intelligence than those who changed their preferences.

5. There was a slight tendency for both boys and girls to shift their choices to occupations requiring workers of higher intelligence and to occupations more in harmony with their respective degrees of intelligence.

6. At the conclusion of the course pupils tended to give better reasons for their choices than they had given at the beginning; for example, they more often cited "Good future in this occupation" than "Good salary or income."

7. The boys were, on the average, looking forward to occupations of a higher level than those of their fathers.

8. There was a marked increase in the percentage of pupils who had arrived at a decision with respect to the high-school curriculum which they wished to follow and a slight increase in the number planning to go to college.